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NEWS RELEASE

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2007 Ozone Forecasting Season Comes to an End

Fires Impact Air Quality This Summer

(Salt Lake City, Utah) – The fires this summer, especially the historic Milford Flat fire, contributed to a series of unhealthy air quality days that gave rise to a record total of 40 days when residents were asked to limit their driving.

The Division of Air Quality (DAQ) ended its forecasting of the 2007 ozone season, which runs from June through September, with a total of 19 “red” days and 21 “yellow” days – 24 more than 2006.

“This was a somewhat typical summer for ozone in that the hottest month of July is typically when air quality deteriorates because of the heat,” said Air Quality Director Cheryl Heying. “However, the smoke from several fires in Utah and outside of Utah made conditions worse.”

The majority of the “no-drive” days came in July, when smoke shrouded much of the state due to the Milford Flat fire that ignited by lightning on July 6, and burned 363,052 acres, the largest wildfire in Utah history. Other fires burning throughout the state and nearby Idaho and California also contributed to poor air quality, caused by a mixture of ozone and fine particulate pollution.

DAQ began to issue “yellow” action days this summer in efforts to stem the rise of pollution, said Bob Dalley, manager of the Air Monitoring Center. “We have been trying to be more pro-active and more protective of public health.”

Ozone is an invisible gas formed when vehicle emissions combine with heat and sunlight. DAQ issues a “yellow” action day when the ozone pollution is building and residents are encouraged to take proactive steps by voluntarily carpooling, consolidating vehicle trips, and avoid fueling the car or mowing the lawn in the middle of the day. A “red” day means pollution levels are high, and residents should avoid using gasoline or diesel-powered engines.

DAQ will continue its three-day forecasts at <http://www.airquality.utah.gov/>, but now the focus will be wintertime pollution, when inversions trap fine particulate pollution in the valleys.

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